



Ministry
of Justice



Department
of Health

25 November 2015

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

National Mental Capacity Forum

As you will by now have probably heard, I have been appointed Chair of the Government's new National Mental Capacity Forum (NMCF). I am delighted to have been chosen to lead this hugely important work, passionate as I have always been to further the rights of individuals who struggle to have their voice heard in society.

Both prior and subsequent to the announcement of my appointment, many of you have been in touch to express your enthusiasm and desire to play a part in the work of the new Forum and to contribute your expertise to our shared aims. While we have a significant challenge ahead in terms of realising the potential benefits of the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) for individuals, the passion of people such as you reaffirms my belief that together we can achieve significant improvements.

I wanted to write to you now to reassure you that all your contributions will be gratefully accepted but to ask you to bear with us while we get the new Forum up and running. Those of you I have already been able to meet will know that I am determined that this new Forum will be different from the usual national-level type group. The new Forum cannot be simply a collection of people meeting once a quarter around a table in London, revisiting the now much discussed poor implementation of the MCA but struggling to effect real change.

The Forum must be action-focussed and be rooted in the "front-line" reality experienced by individuals affected by the Act. I will not rush to establish formal physical structures for the Forum before first establishing the outcomes we wish to achieve and identifying individuals and groups of individuals who can work in between any formal meetings to progress improvements for service-users.

With this in mind, the Forum's first initiative will be to convene our "Voice of the Person Group" the purpose of which is to really hear what matters to those affected by the Act and to ensure their needs drive our subsequent work. Our second initiative will be to hold a listening event in February for the public and front-line professionals to hear their concerns as to difficulties with the Act. Our third initiative, scheduled for late spring will bring together different professional groups to help progress targeted work designed to improve front-line implementation.

I would stress that, informed by what really matters to the people we seek to support, the real work of the Forum will be undertaken by you. As I say, the Forum will not be simply a quarterly meeting, rather a movement of likeminded people who wish to see the benefits of the MCA brought to individuals.

Under the umbrella of the Forum it is my real hope that enthusiastic individuals such as you will reach out to other like-minded people, identify collaborative projects and kick-on with these. While

the new Forum has no direct financial support to offer, we can draw on great expertise and others' resources to help make your projects a success.

With this in mind, I ask you now for your suggestions as to potential projects you wish to pursue in your areas.

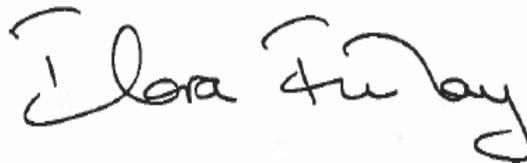
A few bullet points are fine but please do try and identify some of the specifics of what you wish to do and what the intended outcomes are. Please send these to NMCF1@justice.gsi.gov.uk as and when you have them ready.

You will next hear from us in February when we issue the Forum's first newsletter providing information on our emerging priorities and initiatives and highlighting the potential projects you have identified. But please do not wait for us! As I say, it will be you that really drives improvement and I would encourage you to seek out opportunities and pursue these without delay.

I continue to seek out opportunities to gather views on challenges and most importantly, potential corrective actions. Do get in touch if you have events planned at which I could attend to hear the views of those actively working to implement the Act. Clearly I will not be able to attend all such events – the time allocated to my role by the Government is not great – but I would value information on potential opportunities to build my understanding of obstacles to greater MCA implementation. All correspondence should be sent in the first instance NMCF1@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for your support. I look forward to working with you on this exciting endeavour.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ilora Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Baroness Ilora Finlay
Chair, National Mental Capacity Forum